

# The Grand Army of the Republic

VAST BROTHERHOOD OF  
PEACE MADE UP OF CITIZEN  
SOLDIERS, VETERANS OF THE  
GREAT WAR OF THE REBELLION

SURVIVORS OF PATRIOT  
VOLUNTEERS WHO GAVE  
THEMSELVES FOR SACRIFICE  
ON THE ALTAR OF COUNTRY



B. F. STEPHENSON, Founder.

of the nation this grand army came forth to perpetuate the great-hearted, homely rail-splitter, the uncommon man of the common people, whose strong, tender hand took the helm of state just as the first tidal wave of rebellion dashed at his feet the debris of the Kansas-Nebraska controversy—State sovereignty and the perpetuation of African slavery. Once, long before, he had said in a masterly debate with Douglas: "I believe this Government cannot endure permanently, half slave and half free." He did not then dream that the time would come when his own action would prove the truth of his own prophecy.

## The Grand Army of Peace.

From the grand army of war it graduated into the grand army of peace, and it is this that we have with us today. Commander-in-Chief Hartranft said of this army of peace:

"Our organization is founded upon loyalty to the country. Beyond that it has no political significance. Beyond that it is an association of men who have participated in the same vicissitudes and defeats, who have the same convictions and hopes, common memories and mutual sympathies. It is intended to perpetuate old friendships, to revive old memories, and for the mutual support and assistance of old comrades."

## The First Veteran Society.

The first of these societies was the Third Army Corps Union, organized at the headquarters of General Birney, then commanding the first division. An ex-licency not met by the army regulations called for this co-operative movement on the part of the officers of the corps. Their leading motive, at the time, was

to provide means to send home for burial the remains of officers in the corps who were killed in battle, or who died in camp or hospital; a motive that no doubt appealed strongly to every man among them as he dwelt on the possibility of dying in the enemy's country and filling a nameless grave. It is interesting to note that this first social aim of the soldiers' unions was one allied to the most tender and sacred feelings for home and friends, and one that had in mind not only the natural wish of the soldier to sleep his last sleep by the side of his friends in peace, but also the kindly purpose to mitigate the sorrow of those left to mourn by giving them the sad comfort of weeping over their precious dead before he was hidden from their sight forever. The bond of friendship thus solemnly sealed has never been broken.

The second organization during the war period was the Society of the Army of the Tennessee. This society was

formed shortly before the disbanding of the army, but in anticipation of the final muster-out. Naturally, its leading idea was patriotic commemoration, and its stated objects, as far as they went, were identical with those that afterward became the platform of that universal brotherhood of veterans—the Grand Army of the Republic. Several names conspicuous in the Society of the Army of the Tennessee are names identified with the history of the Grand Army of the Republic through many eventful years—notably the names of Generals Logan and Hurlbut, two of the most honored and efficient commanders-in-chief of the Grand Army.

This society, like the Third Army Corps Union at its outset, was composed of officers only. The rank and file while still in the field had no opportunity for such extensive concerted action as that possible to the commissioned officers, but while formal action was practically impossible, to the great

mass of the soldiers the idea of commemorative reunions was omnipresent. Major Stephenson and his companions-in-arms, Chaplain Rutledge, are the accredited founders of the Grand Army of the Republic, and all admit that to Major Stephenson's enthusiasm the order owes its first organization. But perhaps it would not be correct to say that in any one spot alone are to be found the germs of the idea—a sentiment so general sprang into life in various ways all through the army. Sometimes it was narrowed within the compass of a small group of personal acquaintances; sometimes the circle of sympathy expanded far enough to include a whole division or corps.

Usually, the central idea that inspired these unions was the memory of a certain battle, or campaign, that had distinguished these men from their fellow-soldiers; and with the memory arose the feeling that those who had suf-

(Continued on Third Page.)

INNUMERABLE as the sands upon the seashore, the stars in the Milky Way, are the myriads of men whose blood has fertilized every square inch of the known world throughout all the centuries of factional and fraternal strife, yet the tender ties of comradeship engendered through months of marching, campaigning and camping together seem never to have drawn even a half dozen survivors together in an organization for mutual pleasure or practical benefit. Even the Revolutionary patriots, those maimed and battered wrecks of a young nation's war for righteous principles, went their several ways to forgetfulness and the grave, leaving behind scant material for history of times so rich in personal heroism, so magnificent in individual achievements, and only the Society of the Cincinnati left to perpetuate their names.

Some historian has said that in glancing back at the history of military insti-

tutions since the fall of the Roman Empire it will be found that it divides itself naturally into four well defined periods. In the first or barbarous stage he cites the vast hordes of savages, formidable for their numbers. Second comes the feudal period of vassal and highly equipped knights and men-at-arms. The third period he refers to as that of the "standing army" idea, and fourth and last, the "conscription" period.

## Heroes and Patriots.

This historian stopped too soon. There is a fifth period, marking a laurel wreath epoch in the world's history, when men rose to sublimest heights in heroism and voluntarily offered themselves a patriotic sacrifice upon the altar of country.

Of this fifth great period was born the Grand Army of the Republic.

This "grand army" was led by no barbarian chief, it was officered by no

feudal lords, no imperial Caesar directed its operations, and it fought for neither king nor crown. It was mustered in a night from the bone and brawn of a sturdy new nation—the men who turned the wheels of industry and invited to abide with them that fickle dame, Prosperity. Educational institutions closed their doors, pulpits gathered dust and birds nested in the forge chimneys, while the professor, preacher, and forger-master went forth at the simple call of duty to battle for free homes and free institutions.

## Men Unused to Arms.

This grand army was officered largely by men from its own ranks, whose nostrils the smoke of gunpowder had never before saluted, and to whom military tactics were Toltec. Its operations were directed by a silent, taciturn tanner, who wrote upon the blood-red horizon of the rebellious South two immortal words, "Unconditional Surrender." At the head